



Early Journal Content on JSTOR, Free to Anyone in the World

This article is one of nearly 500,000 scholarly works digitized and made freely available to everyone in the world by JSTOR.

Known as the Early Journal Content, this set of works include research articles, news, letters, and other writings published in more than 200 of the oldest leading academic journals. The works date from the mid-seventeenth to the early twentieth centuries.

We encourage people to read and share the Early Journal Content openly and to tell others that this resource exists. People may post this content online or redistribute in any way for non-commercial purposes.

Read more about Early Journal Content at <http://about.jstor.org/participate-jstor/individuals/early-journal-content>.

JSTOR is a digital library of academic journals, books, and primary source objects. JSTOR helps people discover, use, and build upon a wide range of content through a powerful research and teaching platform, and preserves this content for future generations. JSTOR is part of ITHAKA, a not-for-profit organization that also includes Ithaka S+R and Portico. For more information about JSTOR, please contact support@jstor.org.

FOLK-MUSIC IN AMERICA

BY PHILLIPS BARRY

THE existence of American folk-song is no longer a matter of speculation and doubt. The great numbers of singing people, living or dead, who have made homes in our land, have brought with them to our shores the songs their fathers sang, giving the impetus at the same time to the growth of a native species of folk-song, whereby folk-poetry and folk-music has come to be an American institution. And the voice of the folk-singer may yet be heard, as well in the heart of the great city as on the lonely hillside.¹ That much of this treasure of traditional song may not pass away, some effort has already been made, — for it is, alas! too true that its days are numbered. It is to be hoped that this effort may lead to the founding of an American Folk-Song Society. The collections made by Professor Belden and others in the West, as well as the results of my own researches in the North Atlantic States, testify eloquently to the wealth of material nigh at hand. If for no other reason, the great mass of American folk-song is worthy of preservation, as a means of making a record of a phase of American home-life which constitutes an unwritten and neglected chapter in the history of the manners and customs of our people.

Yet there is another reason. The melodies to which folk-songs are sung in America are of infinite variety, and in many instances rarely beautiful. To this source the composer of the future, who shall found a school of American music, will turn for his inspiration.

In the present article, which will serve as an introduction to a more detailed treatment of the subject, to be made by me in the near future, I shall discuss briefly the forms and species of melody, — modes, structure, etc., — and make some mention of the persistence of certain definite national types.

I. THE MODES

Folk-music has a wider range in modal structure than the composer of to-day, self-restricted, avails himself of. The greater number of airs, it is true, are cast in the familiar "major scale," — the Ionian mode of the mediæval writers, called also by them "*tonus lascivus*," in recognition of the fact that already at that time it was the usual mode of secular melodies, in contradistinction to certain other modes regarded as more fitting for sacred music. In my collection, more than seventy-five per

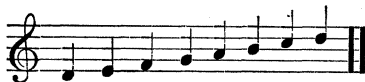
¹ The Irish people in our large cities are keeping alive a great quantity of folk-song. W. C., Boston, Mass., tells of hearing a city laborer of Irish extraction sing from 8 P. M. to 5 A. M., without singing a song twice, a worthy rival to the "old singing-men" of Baring-Gould and others.

cent are in this mode, an indication of a fact, which, on examination, will be found to hold true of other large collections of folk-melodies. Many traditional tunes, however, being those especially which are said to sound uncouth to unaccustomed ears, are cast in the so-called ecclesiastical modes, the characteristic feature of which is the minor seventh. Four such modes¹ are still in use: to wit, —

- ### 1. Mode of A, or Æolian.



- ## 2. Mode of D, or Dorian.



- ### 3. Mode of E, or Phrygian.



- #### 4. Mode of G, or Mixolydian.



Specimen melodies, chosen from among those in my collection, will serve to illustrate the peculiar features of these four modes. I have but one tune in the Phrygian. The rarity of this mode in British folk-music, and consequently in American, is a fact often mentioned by those who have written upon the subject.²

I. *Æolian Mode*

KING JOHN AND THE BISHOP OF CANTERBURY.³



¹ These modes may be represented on the piano by taking the white keys only, in the octaves, A—A, D—D, E—E, G—G, respectively.

² R. V. Williams (*Journal of the Folk-Song Society*, ii, p. 111) writes, "The Phrygian mode is exceedingly rare in British folk-song."

³ *King John and the Bishop*, A. From M. E. E., through S. A. F., Providence, R. I.

NANCY MY LOVER.¹COME ALL YOU RUDE YOUNG MEN.²2. *Dorian Mode*BARBARA ALLAN.³WILLIAM TAYLOR.⁴THERE WAS A FROG.⁵¹ From MS. of 1790.² From MS. of 1790.³ *Bonny Barbara Allan*, E. From M. E. H., St. Mary's, Pa.⁴ *William Taylor*, E. From O. F. A. C., Harrisburg, Pa.⁵ *The Frog and the Mouse*, B. From S. L. G., Canton, Mass.

3. *Phrygian Mode*TERENCE, MY SON.¹4. *Mixolydian Mode*PRETTY POLLY.²MARY NEILL.³GIVE ME A KISS OF THE PRETTY BRIDE.⁴¹ Lord Randall, J. From M. R. M., Newtonville, Mass.² Polly Oliver, C. From S. C., Boston, Mass.³ Mary Neill, A. From S. C., Boston, Mass.⁴ Katharine Jaffray, B. From S. C., Boston, Mass.

Some so-called *modal airs* lack the distinguishing features of one or another of the modes described above. Such an air is the following, — it might be regarded as Dorian, since it has the minor seventh and the major sixth, — though the prominence given to the seventh is good reason for treating it as Mixolydian, in spite of the absence of the distinguishing major third.

GREEN GROWS THE LAUREL.¹



Change of mode occurs very rarely. What is understood by *modulation*, that is, change of key only; also the introduction of the major seventh into a minor melody, are special developments of artistic music. The accompanying melody illustrates change of mode.

THE KING'S DAUGHTER.²



In this instance the change is a violent one, from Æolian (or Dorian) to Ionian in the second part of the melody.

II. STRUCTURE

Under this head I shall refer briefly to some of the structural peculiarities of folk-music in America, which will serve to point out a difference between a traditional tune, the product of individual invention plus communal re-creation, and a "composed" tune. The difference is in many ways analogous to the difference, as regards diction, literary style, etc., between, say, "Sir Patrick Spens" and "The Wreck of the Hesperus," or any of the stirring but unconvincing imitations of the ancient ballad by Sir Walter Scott. Music, as well as words, emphasizes as a fact the inimitability of folk-song.

¹ *Green grows the Laurel*, B. From O. F. A. C., Harrisburg, Pa.

² *Lady Isabel and the Elf-Knight*, G. From J. C., Vineland, N. J.

1. *Circular Melodies*

To a folk-singer, words and music together make the ballad he sings.¹ The one is not felt to exist without the other. An interesting survival of what is evidently a very early form of ballad-singing is the so-called *circular tune*, the feature of which is the absence of the tonic close, as in the accompanying example, —

RAMBLE, MY SON.²

Individual stanzas of a ballad being felt as part of a whole, likewise the air, as sung to any single stanza, was not the melody of the ballad, but part of it. The closing note would not be final, but would have reference to the continuation of the ballad, until, when the final stanza was reached, the melody would take the form in the final cadence, that would indicate the song or ballad was finished. That these melodies have come down to us in an incomplete form is readily accountable, because of the fact that, in singing a ballad, whereas the incomplete close would occur many times, the final cadence would occur only once. The usual is more readily remembered than the unusual.³

2. *Partial Melodies*

I can but give a very brief summary of this interesting feature of folk-music, in some of its manifestations one of the most striking. Partial melodies, or musical phrases, set each to a verse, or, rather, a musical sentence of a ballad, constitute the elements out of which a folk-tune is constructed. It will readily be observed by any one who listens to a folk-singer, that in many instances partial melodies, identical in form or nearly so, are repeated in different parts of the tune, according to a fixed law. The following formulas will serve to identify the more common types of melodic structure.⁴

¹ There are no *recited ballads*. People who do not sing seldom know folk-songs, and then only as recollections, often fragmentary, of songs they have heard sung.

² *Lord Randall*, T. From O. F. A. C., Harrisburg, Pa.

³ Some circular melodies are dance-tunes, — a fact pointing to the intimate connection of ballad and dance.

⁴ C. J. Sharp (*English Folk-Song*, p. 72) treats the subject more fully from the viewpoint of British folk-music.

1. Two elements, *a, b*.*First type: a, b, a, b.*THE MERMAID.¹*Second type: a, b, b', a.*THE IRISH GIRL.²*Third type: a, a', a'', b.*LORD BATEMAN.³2. Three elements, *a, b, c**First type: a, a', b, c.*THE BUTCHER BOY.⁴¹ *The Mermaid*, A. From J. G. M., Newbury, Vt.² *The Irish Girl*, B. From MS. of 1790.³ *Young Beichan*, C. From N. A. C., Rome, Pa.⁴ *The Butcher Boy*, A. From O. F. A. C., Harrisburg, Pa.

Second type: a, b, b', c.

COME ALL YOU MAIDENS FAIR.¹



Third type: a, b, a, c.

FAIR FLORILLA.²



3. Four or more elements, a, b, c, d, etc.

First type: a, b, c, d.

THE JOLLY BEGGAR.³



Second type: a, b, a, c, d, e.

THE MAKING OF THE HAY.⁴



¹ *The Sprig of Thyme*, B. From MS. of 1790.

² *Fair Florella*, C. From A. W. L., Thornton, N. H.

³ *The Jolly Beggar*, A. From S. C., Boston, Mass.

⁴ *The Making of the Hay*, A. From S. C., Boston, Mass.

Third type: *a, b, c, d, e, f, g, d'*.

THE GYPSY DAVY.¹



3. National Types

Folk-melodies of Irish origin exhibit one or two peculiarities of their own that are worthy of passing notice. For example, the arrangement of partial melodies according to the formulas, *a, b, b', a*, and *a, b, b', c*, is very common. Another feature, even more marked, appears in the closing cadence, — the repetition of the final note of the air. The accompanying melody illustrates well both of these characteristics.²

ADIEU, MY LOVELY NANCY.³



Another melody, showing also the structural peculiarity of the pentatonic scale, as well as the repetition of the final note, is worthy of inclusion here, by reason of its great beauty.

¹ *The Gypsy Laddie*, P. From L. N. C., Boston, Mass.

² Cf. also *Mary Neill* and *Give me a Kiss of the Pretty Bride*, s. v., Mixolydian mode.

³ From S. C., Boston, Mass.

THE GREEN MOSSY BANKS OF THE LEA.¹



Though a modal rather than a structural peculiarity of melody, it may be remarked that Irish singers have a liking for airs cast in the Mixolydian mode.

33 BALL STREET, BOSTON, MASS.

¹ From S. C., Boston, Mass.